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## Meeting Minutes, October 2015

National Smokejumper Association Board of Directors

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**NSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING – October 7-8, 2015**  
**Residence Inn – Seattle, WA**

**October 7, 2015**

**Call to order, introduction to site, introductions, approval of the agenda – Cherry**

Jim discussed a change to the agenda to push back the discussion on scholarships to include Terry Egan. Jim read an email from Leo Cromwell. He is missing the meeting because of some vision problems. He will work on getting some of the Region 4 jump records on line, as Roger Savage has done with Region 1.

**Approval of previous meeting minutes – Boatner**

Tom highlighted changes from the draft to the final minutes and reviewed action items that were decided on at the last meeting. Final notes were approved.

**Website Committee update – Lufkin (written report)**

Larry couldn't attend this meeting. Chuck mentioned that the decision has been made to develop a separate web page for merchandising. A number of PDFs need to be updated annually, like the Life Member list and Killed in the Line of Duty roster. We need to be looking for a new webmaster. Chuck reaffirmed the importance of the website as our primary link to our members, their families, and the current jump community.

**Good Samaritan Fund report – Overby**

No additional contributions since our last meeting. Two payments have been made: one to an Alaska jumper whose child was born with health problems (\$4,000), and one to a Boise jumper whose 5 year old son was hit by a car while riding his bike and hurt badly (\$4,000). We made the decision to work through the relevant base managers when we are following up on additional need in Good Samaritan cases, including these 2 recent examples.

Jim initiated a discussion on his recent comments in Smokejumper magazine about the issue of suicide in the smokejumper community. Jim also discussed this issue with one of the current base managers who shares Jim's concerns about this problem. This base manager recommended a book called Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement, by Kevin M. Gilmartin and Jim passed around a copy that he had purchased. Just before leaving home for this meeting, he got a letter from a former smokejumper discussing his experience with PTSD after the sudden end of his smokejumping career because of an injury. This letter described the turmoil and pain this jumper lived through and his thanks to Jim for surfacing this difficult issue. Jim's proposal is that we use the GSF fund to reimburse this jumper for out-of-pocket expenses (\$1200) associated with treatment of his PTSD. Jim would precede this contribution with a phone call to this person to make sure this contribution would be accepted. Should we consider funding a computer and a year's worth of internet access to this person? This led to a broader discussion about mental health issues and what, if any, role the NSA could play in bringing this issue out more in to the open.

Action item: **Mike Overby will pursue additional information on what kind of work or research is being done in this whole area of mental health, suicide, PTSD. Possible sources of info are the agencies themselves, Charlie Palmer at the University of Montana, and the Wildland Firefighter Foundation.**

Action item: **Should we reimburse the \$1200 of out-of-pocket expenses mentioned above?**  
**Vote was unanimous to use the GSF to do this.**

Jim called the former jumper and he was very appreciative of our decision to help him. The Board will continue these discussions at future meetings as we try to determine what role the NSA may have in this difficult and wide ranging issue.

#### Report on 2015 Trails Program - Fred Cooper (written report)

Jim Cherry read Fred's update on the trails program, including his follow-up with the Selway-Bitterroot Foundation on establishing a partnership with NSA. They are not able to do that, as their current financial resources don't allow it. Their funding goes largely to filling intern positions. Fred thinks the Bob Marshall Foundation's response will be similar. We reviewed Fred's trails report summarizing this past season's accomplishments and future plans.

#### Scholarship program - Evaluation of criteria and scoring of applicants, leadership for program – BOD

We discussed the need for standardizing a scoring system for rating scholarship applicants. Current criteria from the website require an essay that is subjective. Should we try to come up with a list of specific, objective criteria, or do we want room for judgement? Our purpose and goals seem vague. What does our ideal candidate look like? We're struggling to define that because the scholarships are currently open to jumpers, former jumpers, children, and even grandchildren. Should we focus on developing leaders within the smokejumper and wildland fire world? Are the amounts of our scholarships appropriate, or should they be higher? Who/what is the target audience?

Jim suggests that the target audience be active jumpers/pilots and their immediate family members (spouse and children). Chuck thinks former jumper/pilots and immediate family should also be included. Terry makes the argument that we should focus on the active jumper community. After discussion and debate:

**Unanimous vote that target audience for NSA scholarships will be any active or former jumper/jumper pilot and their immediate family members (spouse and children). A first scholarship can be awarded to a non-member. Second scholarships require NSA membership. NSA membership will be factored in for all awards.**

Gary Baker has resigned as head of the scholarship committee. We need to reconfirm the membership of the scholarship committee and appoint a new head. Terry Egan has been approached and is willing to be on the Board of Directors and the head of the scholarship committee. **Motion made, seconded and passed to appoint Terry to the BOD and to be head of the scholarship committee. Bob McKean has also volunteered to be a member of the scholarship committee. Larry Lufkin is the 3<sup>rd</sup> member of the scholarship committee.**

Possible criteria:

- Full-time vs part-time student
- Grade point average
- NSA member vs non-member
- financial need

#### Reunion evaluation from Jim Phillips and evaluation of future reunions – BOD

Jim Cherry summarized Jim Phillips evaluation of the 2015 Missoula Reunion. It was both a social and financial success. Jim P. identified some of the issues that contributed to the reunion's success and some of the challenges. He also identified issues to consider for future reunions. The final

amount of profit from the reunion was \$43,958. This was the most successful national reunion we've had. Historically, we have had 40% registration in the last month and this causes some challenges in planning. Missoula has historically had the highest attendance followed by Boise, then Redding.

We had some brief discussion on the viability of having future national reunions, how often, and whether they should be coordinated with a significant anniversary or commemoration.

#### **Membership Report – McDaniel (written report)**

Chuck Sheley handed out figures on current membership and a breakdown by decade of smokejumper rookie numbers and numbers of members. There is a pretty shocking curve trending down from the 1940s to the 2000s in numbers of rookies, jumpers, and members. The impacts on the overall membership in the NSA over the coming years are significant. In the past 6 years, we have gained only 1 new member who rookieed since the year 2000. We currently have about 1500 members and 316 life members.

#### **Evergreen Museum status and proposal for traveling Smokejumper display – McKean/Sheley**

We have had no response to any of our inquiries to the Evergreen Museum about the smokejumper display and our concerns about its status and upkeep. Bob has made 3 personal visits and met with the curator about the future of the display. He hasn't gotten any response at all. Jim Cherry sent a letter to the administrator and also received no response. Jim Cherry will consider a follow-up letter or phone call, otherwise we will let this one ride for a while.

Bob visited the Springfield, OR Museum that has developed a high quality, traveling exhibit on smokejumping. Chuck Sheley and some other Cave jumpers developed this idea. It can actually be shipped around and displayed anywhere in three boxes. Chuck's idea is that we use our membership to advertise the availability of this exhibit and try to get it out and about.

#### **Update on NSA History project – Palmer (written report)**

Charlie sent Jim Cherry a report on his recent trip to Sitka, AK to interview Dick Wilson about his involvement in the Mann Gulch rescue and recovery effort. He also discussed some of his ideas on how to proceed as the new NSA historian. He has already started discussions with the Mansfield Library at the University of Montana on managing current smokejumper historical items as well as receiving future historical donations. He is also considering ways to talk to current smokejumpers about historical preservation. He also has had some interest in writing a book about smokejumper history from a publisher. Charlie sees that as a future opportunity. **The Board is excited about this opportunity and would like him to move forward with this idea, keep us informed, and let us know how we can help.**

#### **Ideas on Future Fundraising-Mike Overby**

Mike presented some ideas on future fundraising ideas. He talked to a local Rotary Club in New Mexico about his project to work on the Baldy Cabin restoration on the Carson NF. He raised money from local businesses and a local hiking club to help pay for shingles and other building supplies. He is going to work on another cabin in 2016 as well as continue on the Baldy Cabin. He is setting up a raffle this fall in that area at a well-attended Oktoberfest event with numerous prizes. He is hoping, through the raffle, to raise additional funds to support these projects. His grand prizes are trips in to the cabins with jumpers carrying gear and cooking. This raises some concerns about NSA liability associated with something like that. Jim Lindell says that although we have liability insurance that protects individual Board members, we don't have broader liability insurance protecting the NSA and its assets. So it appears that we have some unaddressed liability here associated with trails projects and reunions that

needs to be dealt with. Jim says we need “general liability” insurance. **Motion made and seconded to pursue broader liability insurance to cover NSA. Unanimous yes vote to pursue this. So Mike will go ahead and proceed with his raffle and we have until next summer to explore and resolve the liability insurance issue.**

Mike suggests that we explore a major effort to construct a Smokejumper Museum, possibly in Missoula. Funding options would include pavers or bricks, TRAMPS sweat equity, corporate endorsements or sponsorships. Mike recommends that we do a feasibility study in coordination with a University MBA capstone project. There was a lively discussion about this idea with lots of questions about costs, location, land, and staffing.

#### **Budget Report of 2015-16 1<sup>st</sup> quarter Budget – Finance Committee/Russ**

Bob McKean and Brent Russ reviewed our Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Statements with explanations of current balances and why they are managed in certain ways-like the Life Member Endowment.

#### **Investment Committee report – Packard, McKean**

John handed out a summary and reviewed NSA accounts and investments, and amounts and percentages held in equities, short term bond, and fixed categories. We have a Synchrony CD @ 1.04% coming due on November 3, 2015. That will get shifted into equity and short term bond funds. We are pretty close to the 40-60 percentage break that our investment policy directs and we are moving even closer to hitting that percentage.

John also handed out information he put together on how members can make contributions to various NSA programs in different ways (bequests, charitable gift annuity, low basis securities, life insurance beneficiary, etc.). This is a draft of a document that will ultimately update the donation information on our website giving our members accurate information on the different legitimate ways to make donations and/or gifts. John requested feedback on this write-up, so it can be finalized and put on our website.

We discussed the current amounts of our scholarships relative to the high costs of college, and whether we should increase the amount of some of our smaller awards.

**Motion made, seconded, and passed to distribute scholarship money so all are at the \$1000.00 amount.**

#### **Report on Malvin Brown event – Cherry**

Dennis Symes attended the memorial service for PFC Malvin Brown at a small cemetery near Baltimore, MD. He was the 1<sup>st</sup> smokejumper Line of Duty Death and he was a member of the 555<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Battalion. Jim read the remarks made by Dennis at the memorial. Our thanks to Dennis Symes for representing us and for his moving, well-research remarks honoring PFC Brown and the 555<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Merchandise report-future/Sheley**

Chuck handed out a report showing net annual merchandising profit from 1998 through 2014 and compared net profit from time periods he handled it, to time periods professional vendors handled it. Annual income when Chuck has handled merchandising is \$10,914 versus \$2,333 for vendors, a difference of \$8,581 a year. Chuck is 78 years old and can't continue at the current rate. How we handle merchandising in the future, and who handles it, needs to be considered in our discussions about the future. He also included estimates on costs to do the magazine, and hire an executive secretary.

**Recess until October 8<sup>th</sup>**

**October 8, 2015 – reconvene at 7:30 a.m.**

**Long-term planning – Initial stage (Mission Statement review, strategic planning, comprehensive plan for giving, succession issues) – BOD**

Jim read our current Mission Statement and explained the recommendation from the Executive Committee, which **was to remove “and advocating for the program’s evolution.”** After brief discussion of that recommendation and the original intent of this phrase, and **the recommendation that “grassland” be replaced by “rangeland,” a motion was made and seconded to approve these changes. Passed unanimously.**

Jim read our current identified Values. **We discussed adding “Benevolence” to reflect our Good Samaritan Fund and agreed to make that addition to our NSA Values.**

With updated Mission Statement and Values, we began a broader discussion of strategic planning. Chuck kicked this off by suggesting that with an aging organization, improving and expanding our focus on preserving our history should be a top priority. We need to look for or establish a blueprint that describes our process for preserving our history. Charlie Palmer is planning to meet with the U of M Mansfield Library in his new role as Historian. We can ask Charlie to explore opportunities for working with the Mansfield Library in this arena. Possible questions for Charlie to ask:

Can the Mansfield Library serve as an archive for smokejumper historical materials?

What materials can be included in this archive?

Do they have a catalog or summary of materials already archived at the Library?

Do they have a generic plan for an organization like ours to use in preserving its history?

What are the opportunities/costs to coordinate with the Mansfield Library to build a coherent program for preserving and cataloging smokejumper history?

**Jim Cherry will follow up on this subject with Charlie Palmer.**

We discussed, again, the idea of a smokejumper museum and its eventual use as a possible repository of historical artifacts and documents. Because of the time frames and complexities associated with planning and building a museum, Jim asked that we defer that whole idea and discussion for now, and focus on short-term actions we can take to improve our history program.

We discussed again what we should do with the Traveling Museum exhibit that Chuck has developed with the Springfield Museum. The main question is what the market for an exhibit like this is and whether we should spend money without trying to get a little better information. **The decision was made to authorize Chuck and the Executive Committee to seek more information and then determine how to proceed. Motion made, seconded, and passed.**

The next topic was how we will continue to do the work that Chuck Sheley currently handles when he can no longer do it. Chuck gave a little NSA history of how the work has been accomplished going back to about 1995 when we had about 800 members and Jack Demons did most of the work. Chuck shared some per year cost estimates to do the work he is currently doing: Magazine Editor: \$30,000, Executive Secretary: \$30-40,000, Merchandise: \$8,500. This is approximately a \$50,000 increase over current costs. Chuck requested that he receive a raise from his current stipend of \$24,000 to \$30,000. He left the room so the rest of the BOD could discuss that. **We made a motion, seconded and passed it**

**to give Chuck a raise to \$32,000. We added the extra 2,000 to show our sincere appreciation and recognition of Chuck's hard work, dedication, and integrity on behalf of the NSA and its members.**

**Policy for social media identified with the NSA – BOD**

Mike Overby described Linked In and the ability to set up a group on this site. Mike set up a Smokejumper group on Linked In, and he reported that 10 people have joined the group. Jim shared a comment from smokejumper.com from someone who couldn't join the group and was frustrated by that. Jim's concern is that social media sites set up in our name can cause us problems. There is a Facebook page set up as an NSA site that we have no access to. There is a second one that is managed by Chris Sorenson. Proposed policy: **Any social media representing NSA needs to be coordinated with the NSA Board so we have user names and passwords and have access to the site, and some control over content.** Motion made, seconded, and passed.

**Next meeting**

Boise, ID, March 22-23, 2015. Chuck Sheley will set up hotel arrangements. Tom Boatner will check on availability of the Wildland Firefighter Foundation. We will plan on a Tuesday night beer and pizza social at the WFFF. We will invite BLM and USFS smokejumper leaders to attend the meeting.

This Residence Inn in Tukwila is a good site and we will tentatively plan on meeting here again in October, 2016.

Still open is continued discussion about future national reunions, a time interval of 3 or 5 years, and possible themes. One possible theme is the link between smokejumping and veterans, and service in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, the Triple Nickles, and the Conscientious Objectors.

Bill Derr discussed some possible links with USFS and BLM retiree organizations as a source of younger members, associate members, and trail work volunteers.

Jim got an invitation to attend the Aerial Firefighter International convention in Sacramento, CA next year. We don't see a big connection there and won't pursue it.

We had a general discussion about the current size of the Board of Directors and what we should be doing to identify and recruit new members. Jim mentioned the 3 W's we should be looking for in new Board members, and that they should possess 2 of the 3 W's (Willingness to work, Wisdom, Wealth).

Meeting adjourned around 10:30.

**Attendees:** Jim Cherry, Mike Overby, Charlotte Larson, John Packard, Jim Lindell, Bill Derr, Chuck Sheley, Bob McKean, Terry Egan, Tom Boatner